



Carolina DX Association

January 1997

The Pileup

Newsletter of the CDXA

AA4R Bill Parris	President
W4WN Cliff Wagoner	Vice-President
K4MQG Gary Dixon	Sec.-Treasurer
K4ZA Don Daso	Editor

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Another new year is underway & the CDXA is off to a fast start with new officers & appointees. If you missed the election, check out the masthead above. I look forward to serving as President for 1997. All officers pledge to work earnestly to expand & promote activities within the CDXA.

One of our first decisions was to begin publishing *The Pileup* on a regular basis. Don, K4ZA agreed to edit our newsletter monthly, but with no issues in July & December. Even in this "information superhighway" age, the desire for a regular newsletter remains strong among CDXA members. However, the success of such an endeavor must be shared among all members. Don is the editor--he is seeking ideas, input of any kind, for this newsletter, so be sure to give him your assistance & support. We plan to "fold, staple, & stamp" the newsletter at one of our regular Wednesday luncheons. *The Pileup* should appear around the 10th of each month.

Membership in our organization now stands at 160, with members throughout the Carolinas. Although membership is centered around Charlotte, this does not have to continue. We are seeking ways to promote the CDXA throughout the region. Again, we're looking for ways to promote our club. The weekly luncheon, which was N4ZC's idea, has probably done more to promote growth & club enthusiasm than any other single effort. Sometimes, there may only be four or five attendees, but recent months have seen the number exceed 20 several times. Could regular lunches in various locations throughout North & South Carolina be a possibility?

Cliff, W4WN (ex-W5VWN) is working on the idea of regular, scheduled CDXA meetings during the year. Tentative plans are for two "Technical Session" meetings (possibly in February & May). We will also have our usual Charlotte Hamfest social gathering, the Fall Cookout, & Christmas Party. Cliff is also looking for your ideas, input, & so forth concerning such meetings. We're a club; we should have meetings! And by the way, an informal group of volunteers is working on our usual Hamfest booth. We plan on having an active display, including a slide display, a working PacketCluster station, & a raffle. Watch for details in upcoming issues of the newsletter.

N4ZC & AA4S will be promoting the use of their stations for joint as well as individual contest efforts throughout the year. If you want to have some fun, volunteer to join one of these groups. We're looking for someone to coordinate contest activity this year, too. We'd like to see our CDXA "medium club" category scores increase this year. Contact me if you're interested.

We'd like to thank our 1996 officers--WA4OBO, N4ZC, K4SI, & W4IU. We'd like to thank N4ZC, who manages the W4 bureau, along with his "staff" of volunteer sorters, for a job well done. Our bureau remains a model for others to follow. And, of course, thanks to N4ZC & K4MD for maintaining our two local PacketCluster nodes. Such individual efforts remain one reason why the CDXA continues to flourish.

Again, we're looking forward to serving you--the membership--& we're looking for input, ideas, & help from each & every one of you. We want to make things happen in 1997. Best DX to you!

Best regards de Bill, AA4R

EDITORIAL

1997 promises to be an interesting year, in a variety of ways. I have agreed to edit this newsletter at the urging of several club members who apparently learned something about the use of flattery. Something about how earlier issues of *The Pileup* looked, appeared regularly, carried interesting articles, & so forth. So...here we go again, into the breach with the 1997 CDXA newsletter...

I still believe what I wrote in my last editorial in December 1994. That the CDXA should move into larger, more visible roles within our hobby, that CDXA should be a more viable & interesting club. I also believe this year's officers share some of this vision--another factor in agreeing to edit the newsletter again.

Creating the newsletter will again be a labor of love, as always. It'll even be fun, sometimes. It'll be rewarding, sometimes. What will be necessary, always, will be YOUR help, YOUR input, YOUR comments and suggestions. It is, after all, YOUR newsletter. I merely edit it.

So, herewith, an open invitation to submit something, please. Almost anything is news or noteworthy for an organization like ours. Our membership pool is large & diverse; I know some of you can provide articles, tips or suggestions. And please do not worry about writing style or form or anything of the sort--that's my job, as editor. Submit your thoughts, ideas or suggestions any way you can. The US Mail still works well, as does the telephone @704-531-1199, or use my e-mail address: k4za@juno.com (& the period here is for the end of this sentence).

—K4ZA

A GENTLE REMINDER

Once again, it's time for all members to pay their CDXA dues. (The fee for DX PacketCluster users is \$30.00; the fee for those who are only repeater users and associate members is \$15.00.)

This year, for the first time, we're adding a small incentive. CDXA has worked out a special offer for each member who pays his or her dues prior to February 14th. For only \$1.00 above the regular rates listed above, W4MPY (Wayne Carroll, "The QSL Man") will provide you with 100 "EyeBall QSO" cards.

These business card-sized mini-QSLs will have the CDXA logo along with your name, call, and address. The cards can be picked up at the CDXA booth at the Charlotte Hamfest in March. If you're unable to attend, we'll work out some way to get the cards to you. Remember, the orders will go to W4MPY on the 15th of February. If you've already paid your dues, but would like to take advantage of this offer, send your dollar to Gary & let him know.

DON'T BE LATE WITH YOUR DUES & TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS SPECIAL OFFER!

Remit to: Gary Dixon, K4MQG, at 1606 Crescent Ridge, Fort Mill, SC 29715.

CDXA Booth at the Charlotte Hamfest

One way to promote our club, as well as liven up our booth display at the Charlotte Hamfest, is with a continuously running slide display. The idea is to "show off" member stations & antennas. We have the equipment--we just need your slides. Some options are available:

- 1) Ideally, everyone will supply the club with two or three slides of their stations. It would be nice if your callsign was visible in the picture, of course. Please identify the slides with your call (just print your call on the mount somewhere), so we can return them after the Hamfest.
- 2) Another option is for you to submit color photos (prints) of your station & antennas. For \$2.50/per picture, the club will create slides from your prints. You'll receive your slides & prints back, after the Hamfest. (Be advised that slides made this way will "look different" than original slides--something to consider if you want to present your station in the best light.)
- 3) CDXA will come to your QTH & shoot the slides for you. Obviously, this is a more-or-less last ditch effort option, restricted to the Charlotte area, of course. A fee of \$2.00/per slide will help offset the cost of film & processing.

Jim, K4UHL has agreed to oversee this project (& take the pictures that may be needed or converted). Please contact Jim on PacketCluster, by telephone at 704-392-3931 or via e-mail using: jlong@dol.state.nc.us (& once again the period here is for the end of the sentence). While this sounds like a simple project, there are lots of variables. We need the pictures in hand as soon as possible. If you're going to request a picture-taking session, please do so BEFORE February 1st. This is a great way to share information, a great way to show off your station (if you haven't yet made the cover of *CQ* or *QST*). And it should be a crowd pleaser, too! Who knows, we might convert some members from passers-by stopping to look at our running display!

DX Advisory Committee News

Not much has happened within the DXAC for several months. There are currently no petitions before the DXAC regarding additions or deletions to DXCC. Correspondence to both ARRL & the DXAC has, however, been heavy, & filled with dissent for the DXCC status of P5, North Korea. (In case you don't know, the first-ever demonstration of ham radio in P5 totalled 18 QSOs with 12 different stations. Accepting this operation knocked virtually everyone from Honor Roll #1 slots.) A tremendous amount of dissent from DX clubs & DXCC members caused ARRL's Board of Directors to discuss this operation in detail during their July Board Meeting. And, the Board directed the DXAC to study the following proposed addition to DXCC rules: *DXCC accreditation may be suspended for operation from countries or entities where amateur radio is specifically denied by said government. Accreditation may be allowed when said government fully recognizes and approves amateur radio operations.*

The DXCC desk published this list of countries affected by the proposed rule change (Point 1 Countries without regular amateur radio service & without normal license structure). Current DXCC countries are: 1A0, 3V, 5A, 5U, 7O, A5, E3, EP, HV, HZ, P5, ST, ST0, T5, XW, XZ, & YA. This would bring Honor Roll to 303 total countries.

The majority of the DXAC, including me, have expressed disappointment with the League's decision to credit the P5 operation. Most DXAC members also do not favor any DXCC rule changes right now. We believe the DXCC status of such countries should be addressed by the DXCC 2000 committee. And speaking of this committee, I urge all of you to fill out the questionnaire on page 83 of October 1996 *QST*. Each of you has the opportunity for input on new DXCC rules. Roanoke Director N4MM has indicated ARRL will accept input until the spring of 1997, when the questionnaires will be evaluated. Please, take a moment to provide your input.

—K4MQG DXAC Roanoke Division

PacketCluster News from N4ZC & K4MD

Both local nodes now have 440 MHz access. Both are currently running at 1200 baud, but plan to go to 9600 baud soon. If you're thinking about gear, Kenwood's TM-733 is on sale for around \$395—as cheap a dual-band radio capable of the higher baud rate as you'll probably find. And, if you're thinking of moving to 440 MHz/9600 baud, you might consider the KPC-9612 TNC. Both 'ZC & 'MD are using it. The 9612 can run both baud rates simultaneously, as both Rog & Joe are also doing. K4MD is on 441.075 MHz with a TM-451A, putting 35 watts into an antenna atop the house (for now). N4ZC is on 441.000 MHz with a TM-733, running 35 watts into an antenna at 140 feet. We're working to add a digi-peater at DXNG on 441.000 MHz; this digi will be on-the-air just as soon as K0SD can put a radio on site. (A new, 20-foot-higher, antenna was installed at DXNG last month.)

So far, 440 PacketCluster users are limited. But these users get their spots before the 144 MHz users, & when they read mail & bulletins, the process is faster.

A few words on signal strength. Given similar antenna heights & gain for both 144 & 440 MHz, you should see an S-9 signal on 144 MHz if you want to guarantee getting good 440 MHz signals. With a 144 MHz signal of only S-5 or lower, you probably won't succeed on the higher band.

Thoughts on Vanity, the Internet, life itself, & other things

I sometimes encounter folks who congratulate me on my current call. I remain puzzled. All I did was send in an application. I didn't take a test, or compete in any way, for this call. It's different, & nice, once more to have a call that's "correct" for the area where I'm living. And it's nice to have a call with some history (the original holder was a PVRC'er). I sometimes think I'm an old fart now—with this callsign. After 34 years of hamming, maybe I'm getting there? But I changed because I could. I changed because I wanted something shorter & better, as a contester, than the old WA8MAZ or WZ3Q calls. This was my fourth choice. Having had it a while, I'm pleased. I think I was somehow meant to have it, rather than any of the other 24 choices. That's the only "vain" part of the whole process. For me, the choice seems centered around history, & pride, & a serious commitment to ham radio.

The Internet remains a fascinating place to visit. For a "bookish" kind of guy (albeit one who K4MQG calls on for heavy lifting), it's a special place. The World Wide Web contains a wealth of places you can visit & download information from; future articles will detail some of them. Indeed, the whole realm of computers & ham radio has yet to be dealt with in a meaningful way. If you haven't truly thought about this one, give it a try. The whole CPU-based concept prevails, already, from a simple kitchen toaster to your car to that sleek super-charged box setting next to your computerized rig. They're everywhere. And nowhere does this come home with more force, more fantasy-fulfilling intensity, than on the Internet. It's both metaphor & "the real world" for computer folks. For a bookish kind of guy, it's art & science—a "trip" & pure information—all rolled into one. If you haven't already tried it....

I've already editorialized that '97 is going to be an interesting year. My life's in a bit of flux right now. For those of you who follow such things, I've taken on new job responsibilities, as a Director of Photography for Corporate Media Services here in town. Clients range from mom-&-pop entrepreneurs to ESPN/CNN/network folks to corporate types, like IBM. So far, it's one of the most interesting production jobs I've ever had. And I think N4ZC is happy I'm still around....

Writing remains something I continue to do—professionally & as an amateur, like this. It remains something I enjoy. Without a station (not even Packet!) here at the house, I find thrills in helping others (like 'ZC & 'MQG) with their stations, researching topics on the Internet, & in listening to the bedside TS-830. Somehow, I still think of myself as a serious, dedicated ham radio operator.

—K4ZA

Some Remarks On Using Two Radios (at one time!)

While the CDXA isn't truly a contest club, some of its members do participate, thus these thoughts on using two rigs at one time. Single-Operator Two Radio (SO2R) use isn't a new technique--an article in 1938's *Radio* announcing the first World Wide Contest details the advantages of using two receivers at once. For contest purposes, this advantage is still there, perhaps more so in today's competitive times. In fact, it's probably the single most simple, and yet, most complex, method available for the single operator to increase his/her score.

During the recent Phone Sweepstakes, I operated from N4ZC's QTH. The primary rig was a Kenwood TS-850S, driving an AL-1200, feeding the 20M stack. The secondary rig was a TS-440S, driving an Alpha 78, feeding all the other antennas. (The thinking was to use the "no tune" feature of the 78 to allow quick band changes on the second radio.) Separation of antennas at ZC's permitted this setup with no special filtering; no interference was noted at any time, on any band. Early plans to start on 20M were dashed when 15M sounded good. So, I began on 20M, but shifted almost immediately to the second rig--running on 15M. (I posted notes on each amp bandswitch to remind me to change the "band" setting within CT.)

The real "secret" to SO2R operation revolves around control--a system where you can switch several things at once. You need to be able to listen in various ways. Typically, one radio appears in your left ear, while the second radio appears in your right ear; switching options usually also permit both ears to listen to either radio. Key & mic lines are also switched. My setup is a bit different. I prefer to a mixing system, plus switching. This way, I can adjust the levels more carefully. It seems to help me to have a bit of the run radio appear with the S&P radio.

This brings us to the crux of SO2R operation. A moment's review will convince you that listening to your own CQing is a waste of time. Instead, you can & should be tuning--looking for new contacts. Whether you're on another band or not, you should be "searching" even while "running." For the SS, I was set up in a more-or-less Field Day arrangement. Without a voice keyer, or a way to switch microphones, I spent most of the contest with the 440's hand mic nestled in my right hand. After 1000 QSOs on Saturday night (I was extremely pleased!), my left hand typing skills had reached their peak. I can assure you it's difficult to talk with someone simultaneously speaking in your ear. The concentration levels required of SO2R are amazing. Several times, I found myself signing exotic calls--using parts of the phonetics I was hearing. Or, even more embarrassing, I would find myself saying I was "N4ZC" because some part of my brain was operating automatically while another part was concentrating somewhere else! Using K4ZA for the very first time probably didn't help, either. I was also hampered by having to get "in the groove" of operating--something folks with home stations won't usually encounter.

A few week's later, I would resurrect this system for the ARRL 10M Contest. The primary difference for this contest would be using the 850/AL-1200 combination on SSB with the 6-element beam, while the 440/A-78 would feed the 4-element and other, lower antennas for CW use. In this way, I could always be checking for CW contacts--even while CQing on phone. This worked well last year, but for some reason, Saturday night, the 440's display became erratic above 22 MHz, so I began operating with only a single radio, switching & tuning the entire band.

Is it worth it? Absolutely, especially for SS. (The log shows almost 100 QSOs on the second rig, & a new section record. Not too bad.) A second radio will allow you to check activity on other bands. And, for SS, the second radio will prevent boredom on Sunday, when you're calling CQ & working people, but ever so slowly....

Until you try it, you won't realize how much time you've wasted listening to yourself calling CQ.

So, think about a bit about this history—as you wrap that balun connection against the weather....

The next time you're out back working on the antenna or tower setup, and the proverbial roll of "electrical tape" comes to hand, consider this... In 1996, 3M celebrated the 50th anniversary of the birth of vinyl electrical tape. Today, it's safe to say we all take this tape for granted—splicing, terminating and providing electrical insulation and protection, sealing joints, and so on. Before 3M invented this tape, there was "friction tape" made of tar-coated cotton and vulcanized rubber adhesive. While such tape provided solid mechanical protection, it was subject to weather, had low dielectric strength, and had to be applied over rubber tape in order to insulate connections. The rubber adhesive, which was vulcanized with sulfur, sometimes caused corrosion. In the early 1940s, vinyl plastic began its somewhat inevitable march toward dominating products from shower curtains to wire insulation. By 1946, 3M scientists had successfully combined a plasticizer system with a non-sulfur-based adhesive. The first commercially available tape was made for wire-harness wrapping. It wasn't black; it was yellow. Later versions were white, which proved to be unsuitable in ultraviolet light. 3M began making its new vinyl tape in black.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THAT UBQUITOUS PLASTIC ELECTRICAL TAPE WE ALL USE ALL OF THE TIME

Don Daseo **K4ZA**
3618 Gustar Court
Charlotte NC 28212
e-mail: k4za@juno.com
704-531-1199



FIRST CLASS MAIL

WA4UNZ 96
Ken Boyd
6733 Cedar Springs Rd.
Charlotte, NC
28212



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